

Living in the Past

Historical perspective



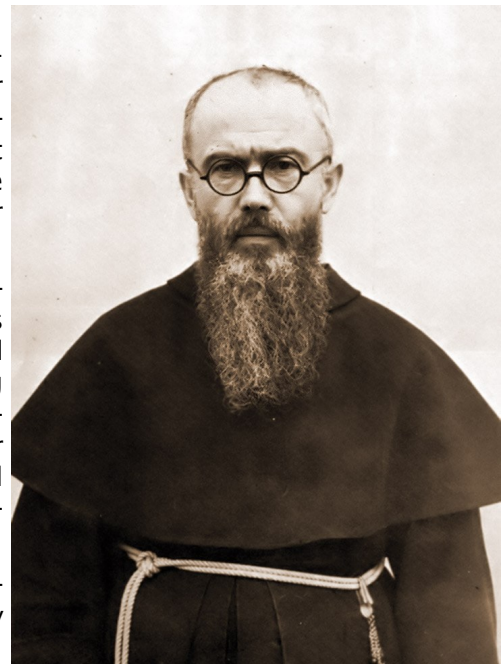
The Patron Saint of amateur radio

It was August 1941, at the height of World War II. Catholic priest [Maximilian Kolbe](#) was prisoner number 16670 at Auschwitz, Poland, awaiting his fate after volunteering to replace another who was randomly selected by the camp deputy commandant to die by starvation, in an effort to deter further escape attempts.

Back up to 1933, the Polish monastery, where Father Kolbe had his roots, started publishing a daily newspaper with a huge circulation. By 1938, he learned that a relatively new technology called radio could be used to get the word out faster and to a much larger audience, so he got licensed as SP3RN, which served both the amateur and the broadcast listenership.

Soon after the outbreak of the War, Father Kolbe was arrested by the Germans, and then released three months later. Upon his release, he continued work where he and other friars provided shelter to Polish refugees, including two thousand Jews, whom he hid from German persecution in [Niepokalanow](#). It was widely rumored that Father Kolbe used his radio station to arrange the underground movement and deportation of many who were trying desperately to escape the Nazi slaughter.

After starvation failed to kill Father Kolbe at the concentration camp, The Nazi guards finally murdered him by



[Father Kolbe's Auschwitz cell](#)



[Westminster Abbey](#)

lethal injection on 14 August 1941.



[SP3RN at his shack](#)

Although the [eight official patronages](#) pronounced upon Father Kolbe by several Popes did not include amateur radio, many ham radio enthusiasts world-wide regard him that way today nonetheless, for his use of radio to serve and save many during a wartime crisis. You can learn more about Father Maximilian Kolbe in the [National Catholic Register](#).